

# The Railroad Center of the Western Empire

## MANY RACES SAW THE EAST AND WEST LINKED TOGETHER IN CHAIN OF STEEL

How a United Nation Was Made a Reality Reviewed in History by Late General Dodge on Completion of First Transcontinental Railroad by Driving of Last Spike at Promontory Point, May 10, 1869.

Perhaps no greater importance is attached to any event in history than the driving of the last spike in the performance of the work that united the Central and Union Pacific railroads and the first transcontinental line. This event occurred at Promontory Point on May 10, 1869, and was marked by appropriate ceremonies in which people of the east and people of the west, together with native Indians, Mexicans, Chinese, negroes, presenting an air of cosmopolitanism took part. Because it marked an epoch in industrial progress the act has been likened in historical importance to the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

In his history of "How We Built the Union Pacific Railway," which was published as a senate document on the fortieth anniversary of the completion of the first ocean to ocean railway route, the late Major-General Grenville M. Dodge, former chief engineer of the Union Pacific, devotes an entire chapter to the driving of the last spike at Promontory Point and its significance with the history of the nation. The chapter follows:

The building of a Pacific steam road to connect the streams flowing into the Atlantic and Pacific was advocated as early as 1819, before a mile of railroad was built in any part of the world. It took practical form when Asa Whitney, in 1845, in petitioning Congress in behalf of a Pacific railroad, said: "You will see that it will change the whole world." Senator Thomas H. Benton in 1849 pleaded that the great line when built should be adorned with its crowning honor, the colossal statue of the mass of a peak of the Rocky Mountains, overlooking the road, the mountain itself, the pedestal, and the statue a part of the mountain, pointing with outstretched arm to the western horizon, and saying to the flying passenger, "There is the East! There is India!" Charles Sumner in 1850 said: "The railroad from the Atlantic to the Pacific, traversing a whole continent and binding together two oceans, this mighty thoroughfare when completed will mark an epoch of human progress

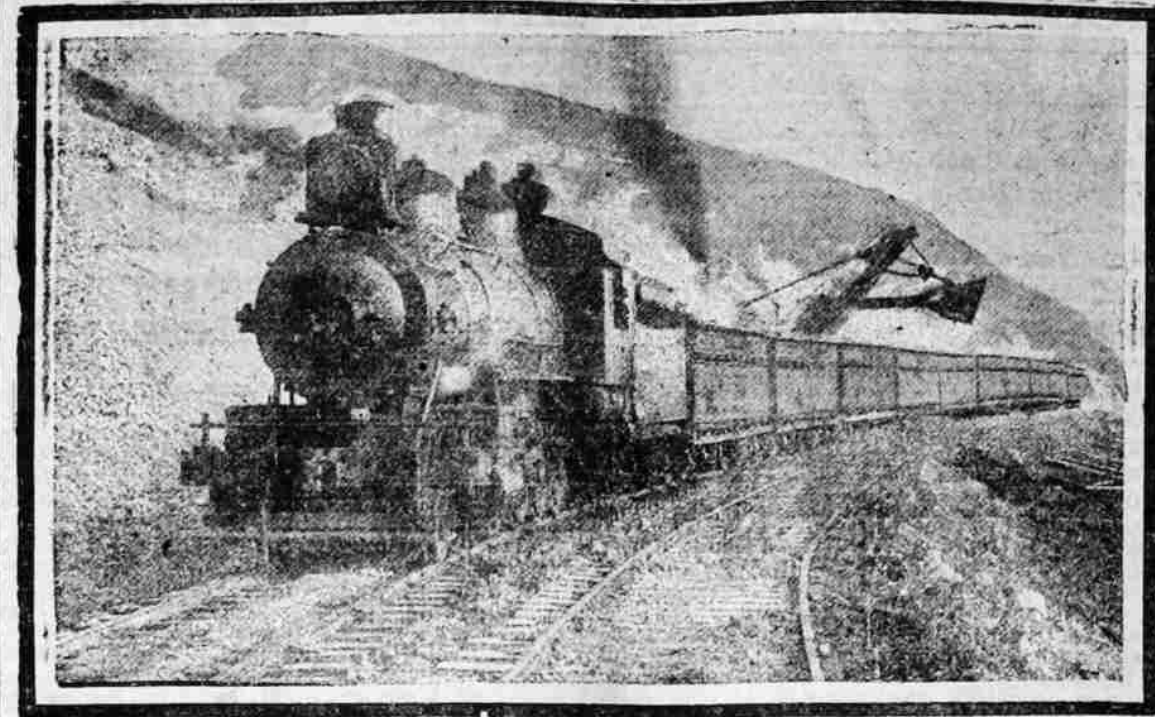
second only to that of our Declaration of Independence. May the day soon come!"

All Prophecies Fulfilled. And it did come, and all the prophecies were fulfilled when the first transcontinental line was completed and the tracks joined at Promontory Point, Utah, on May 10, 1869. The ceremony was one of peace and harmony between the Union Pacific, coming from the east, and the Central Pacific coming from the west. For a year or more there had been great contention and rivalry between the two companies, the Union Pacific endeavoring to reach Humboldt Wells, on the west boundary of Utah, and the Central Pacific rushing to reach Ogden, Utah, to give them an outlet to Salt Lake City.

In the building of a Pacific steam road to connect the two oceans two lines were graded alongside of each other for 225 miles between Ogden and Humboldt Wells. Climbing Promontory Mountain, they were not a stone's throw apart.

When both companies saw that neither could reach its goal, they came together and we made an agreement to join the tracks on the summit of Promontory Mountain, the Union Pacific selling to the Central Pacific 55 miles of its road back within five miles of Ogden and leasing trackage over that five miles to enable the Central Pacific to reach Ogden. These five miles were not only a part of the Union Pacific but used by their line north to Idaho. This agreement was ratified by Congress. Each road built to the summit of Promontory, leaving a gap of about 100 feet of rail to be laid when the last spike was driven. The chief engineers of the Union and Central Pacific had charge of the ceremony and the work, and we set a day far enough ahead so that trains coming from New York to San Francisco would have ample time to reach Promontory in time to take part in the ceremonies.

A Cosmopolitan Gathering. On the morning of May 10, 1869, Hon. Leland Stanford, governor of California and president of the Cen-



Constant Vigilance Keeps the Roadbed in Perfect Condition.

tral Pacific, accompanied by Messrs. Huntington, Hopkins, Crocker, and trainloads of California distinguished citizens, arrived from the west. During the forenoon Vice President T. C. Durant and Directors John R. Duff and Sidney Dillon and Consulting Engineer Silas A. Seymour of the Union Pacific, with other prominent men, including a delegation of Mormons from Salt Lake City, came in on a train from the east. The national government was represented by a detachment of "regulars" from Fort Douglass, Utah, accompanied by a band, and 600 others, including Chinese, Mexicans, Indians, half-breeds, negroes and laborers, suggesting an air of cosmopolitanism, all gathered around the open space where the tracks were to be joined.

Telegraphic wires were so connected that each blow of the descending sledge could be reported instantly to all parts of the United States. Corresponding blows were struck on the bell of the city hall in San Francisco, and with the last blow of the sledge a cannon was fired at Fort Point. General Safford presented a spike of gold, silver and iron as the offering of the territory of Arizona. Governor Tuttle, of Nevada, presented a silver spike from his state. The connecting tie was of California laurel, and California presented a spike of gold in behalf of that state. A silver sledge had also been presented for the

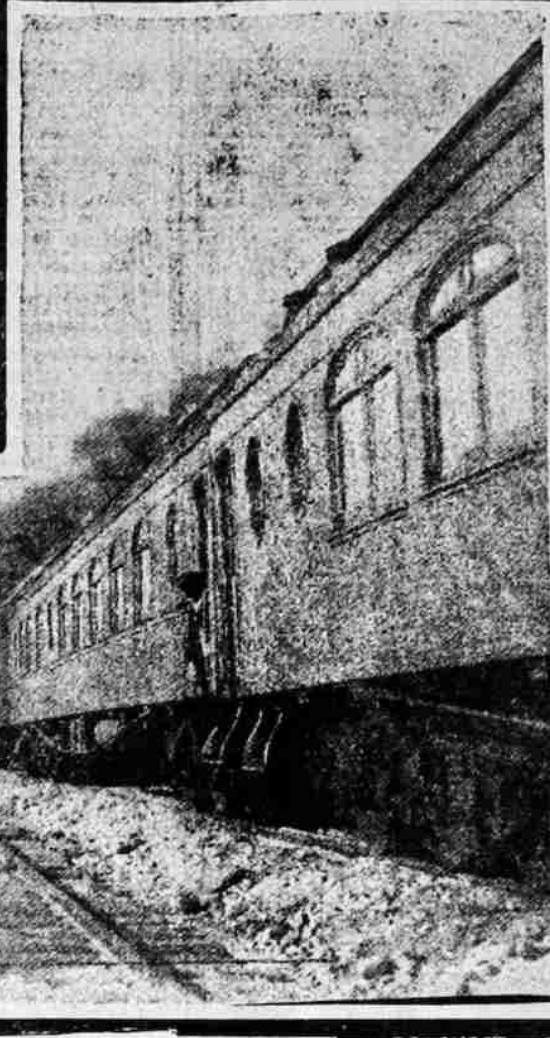
occasion. A prayer was offered. Governor Stanford, of California, made a few appropriate remarks on behalf of the Central Pacific and the chief engineer responded for the Union Pacific. Then the telegraphic inquiry from the Omaha office, from which the circuit was to be started, was answered:

They Seldom Hit the Spike. To everybody: Keep quiet. When the last spike is driven at Promontory Point we will say "Done." Don't break the circuit, but watch for the signals of the blows of the hammer. The spike will soon be driven. The signal will be three dots for the commencement of the blows.

The magnet tapped one—two—three—then pause—"Done." The spike was given its first blow by President Stanford and Vice President Durant followed. Neither hit the spike the first time, but hit the rail, and were greeted

by the lusty cheers of the onlookers, accompanied by the screams of the locomotives and the music of the military band. Many other spikes were driven on the last rail by some of the distinguished persons present, but it

Overland Limited Crossing the Ogden-Lucien Cut-off on the Line of the Southern Pacific Railroad.



OVER THE GREAT INLAND SEA ON "TH READS OF STEEL"

Pacific were joined together, never to be parted.

The wires in every direction were hot with congratulatory telegrams. President Grant and Vice President Colfax were the recipients of the especially felicitous messages. On the evening of May 8, in San Francisco, from the stages of the theaters and other public places, notice was given that the two roads had met and were to be wedded on the morrow. The celebration there began at once and practically through the town. The booming of cannons and the ringing of bells were united with other species of noise making of which jubilant humanity finds expression for its feelings on such an occasion. The buildings in the city were gay with flags and bunting, business was suspended and the longest procession that San Francisco had ever seen attested the enthusiasm of the people. At night the city was brilliant with illuminations. Free railway trains filled Sacramento with an unwonted crowd, and the din of cannons, steam whistles and bells followed the final message.

Inspired Bret Harte Poem.

At the eastern terminus in Omaha the firing of a hundred guns on Capitol Hill, more bells and steam whistles, and a grand procession of fire companies, civic societies, citizens and visiting delegates echoed the sentiments of the Californians. In Chicago a procession of four miles in length, a lavish display of decoration in the city, and on the vessels in the river, and an address by Vice President Colfax in the evening were the evidences of the city's feeling. In New York, by order of the mayor, a salute of a hundred guns announced the culmination of the great undertaking. In Trinity church the Te Deum was chanted, prayers were offered, and when the services were over the chimes rang out, "Old Hundred," "The Ascension Carol," and National airs. The ringing of bells of Independence Hall and the fire stations of Philadelphia produced an unusual concourse of citizens to celebrate the national event. In other large cities of the country the expressions of public gratification were hardly less hearty demonstrative. Bret Harte was inspired to write the celebrated poem of "What the Engines Said." The first verse is:

What Was It the engines said, Pilots touching, head to head, Facing on the single track, Half a world behind its back? This is what the engines said, Unreported and unread.

Not forgetting my old commander, Gen. W. T. Sherman, who had been such an aid in protecting us in bulk-

(Continued on Page 15).

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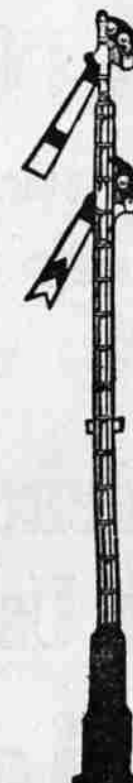
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